

# USDAnews

USDA's Employee News Publication—For You & About You!

## USDA's Proposed Budget For FY 2011 Emphasizes Priorities, Fiscal Discipline

by Ron Hall

### Office of Communications

“This budget acknowledges the unsustainable debt accumulated over the past decade and works to get our fiscal house in order. It uses taxpayer dollars wisely and takes common-sense steps that many families and small businesses have been forced to take with their own budgets. We are investing in American agriculture and the American people without leaving them a mountain of debt.”

That was part of Secretary **Tom Vilsack's** recent message to USDA employees concerning USDA's proposed budget for FY 2011. Vilsack had included those comments in an e-mail, titled “USDA's FY 2011 Budget” and dated Feb. 2, 2010, that was sent to all employees. USDA's proposed FY 2011 budget had been formally unveiled one day earlier on February 1 and then transmitted to Congress.

Noting that the Department's proposed budget for FY 2011 essentially freezes funding for discretionary programs at the FY 2010 level, he advised in his e-mail message that the proposed USDA budget reflects “the difficult economic climate of 2009, when more and more Americans had to rely on USDA to help put food on the table, and the challenges that rural communities have faced for decades grew

more acute.”

“Because we care deeply about farmers and ranchers,” he continued, “the budget maintains the agricultural safety net, while instituting some targeted reductions in farm program payments.”

“Just as importantly,” he affirmed, “this budget pursues priorities that will have the greatest impact in our efforts to address the challenges facing rural America and lay a new foundation for growth and prosperity.”

Vilsack then outlined the four strategic priorities for the Department upon which its proposed FY 2011 budget is built, as follows:

① This budget will help rural communities create prosperity so they are self-sustaining, economically thriving, and growing in population.

② This budget promotes the production of food, feed, fiber, and fuel, for the domestic and export market, as USDA works to strengthen the agricultural economy for farmers and ranchers.

③ USDA will ensure that all of America's children have access to safe, nutritious, and balanced meals.

④ USDA will ensure that the country's national forests and private working lands are conserved, restored, and made more resilient to climate change, while enhancing the country's water



Look closely at the video screen at the right of this picture and you'll see four ERS agricultural economists displayed on the screen. Located in a conference room at ERS headquarters in Washington, DC, they're listening to a presentation by students—depicted in the larger picture—located in a classroom at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee. The subject of the live interchange is organic production—and it's one aspect of a unique Distance Learning Program developed by ERS specialists. Note **Doris Newton's** story on page 4.—**PHOTO BY MICHAEL THOMAS**

resources.

“We made tough decisions,” he then advised, “but this budget reflects our values and common sense solutions to the problems we face.”

USDA's FY 2011 proposed budget calls for an estimate of approximately \$146 billion in spending. According to **Scott Steele**, Director of the Office of Budget and Program Analysis, this is about \$4 billion more than the Department's currently estimated spending for FY 2010.

Steele noted that roughly 80 percent of those proposed expenditures—or \$117 billion—in 2011 would be for mandatory programs that provide services required by law. They

include many of the Department's nutrition assistance, farm commodity, export promotion, and conservation programs. USDA's discretionary programs account for the remaining 20 percent—or almost \$29 billion—in 2011. They include the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program; rural development loans and grants; research and education; soil and water conservation technical assistance; management of National Forests; domestic and international marketing assistance; animal and plant health; and programs that address pest and disease threats.

USDA's proposed budget reflects a staffing level for FY 2011  
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# Tom Vilsack *Secretary of Agriculture*

**D**ear Fellow Employees, As you know, one of President **Barack Obama's** top priorities for USDA is that we work to improve the health and well-being of America's children. The President, First Lady, and I are focused on this issue because the status quo is unacceptable and the costs are so high. It is no exaggeration to say that the health of our nation—of our economy, our national security, and our communities—depends on the health of our children. If our children are hungry, they cannot learn. If they are not healthy, they won't succeed in leading productive lives. But in 2008, 16.7 million American children lived in households that had difficulty putting enough food on the table. At the same time, nearly one third of our children in America are obese or overweight, with incredible potential for enormous long-term medical costs.

Whether you realize it or not, nearly every one of USDA's mission areas has an important role to play in the effort to raise healthier kids:

- our scientists conduct research on human nutrition;
- we support the farmers and ranchers who produce a healthy food supply for the nation and help ensure that it's safe to eat;
- we support efforts to ensure access to healthy foods in communities that have lacked a good grocer;
- FS and NRCS work to preserve our natural resources, and encourage the outdoor physical activity that is so important to a healthy lifestyle.

Recently, many of us have been called on to help **Michelle Obama** with the launch of her 'Let's Move' campaign—which will play a critical role in raising a generation of kids to be healthy adults.

But of course, it is the folks in the Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services mission area who are most focused on these issues. Each day they help feed school lunches to 31 million American children, and millions more meals to young children and their mothers. They maintain **MyPyramid.gov**, and provide nutrition education and useful tools to help Americans lead healthy lives.

In the next months, the congressional reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Programs run by FNCS—school lunches and breakfasts, after-school and child care feeding programs, and WIC—presents us

with an important opportunity to combat child hunger and improve the health and nutrition of children across the nation.

In a February speech at the National Press Club, I outlined a proposal for a strong reauthorization that will form the legislative centerpiece of the Administration's effort to ensure the health of our youngsters. We have called for increased funding for the programs of \$10 billion over 10 years to help us to increase participation, while improving the nutritional value of the meals being served to our children.

If you are interested in more detail about our legislative priorities please read my speech on USDA's website. Also I want you to know about a step you can take today to promote healthy kids in your own community by improving the health of the whole school environment.

This is the HealthierUS School Challenge, a USDA program which recognizes schools that do an exceptional job promoting meal participation, meal quality, nutrition education, and physical activity. This program is the gold standard for all of our schools. It sets a very high bar that, to date, has only been met by 600 schools across the country.

The First Lady and I have set a goal of doubling the number of schools participating in the HealthierUS School Challenge in the next year, and to add 1,000 schools per year for two years after that.

You can help make this a reality by looking for partners and promoting the program in your community. Help establish a HealthierUS school by working with parent-teacher associations, sports leagues, local businesses, or non-profits to promote the program. Talk to your colleagues, your child's teacher, a local school administrator, or school board. Write your newspaper.

We are committed to the HealthierUS School Challenge program because we know that comprehensive solutions make a real difference. In Philadelphia a school nutrition policy that included nutrition education, healthy food requirements, staff training, and community involvement was found to reduce the incidence of childhood overweight in students by 50% over two years.

At the end of the day our goal is simple: President Obama, the First Lady, and I want the next generation to be the healthiest and best educated in our history. USDA is already hard at work on this effort, and I know we can play an even bigger role. ■

## *Proposed Budget...continued from pg. 1*

of 106,510 total staff years, including non-federal county employees. This is a decrease of 3,957 staff years from the currently estimated FY 2010 total staff year level of 110,467.

Agencies that reflect proposed increases in total staff years for FY 2011 include the Agricultural Research Service (an increase of 82 staff years, to total 8,433 staff years), the Food and Nutrition Service (56, to total 1,443), the Food Safety and Inspection Service (31, to total 9,727), the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (16, to total

1,379), and the Grain Inspection, Packers & Stockyards Administration (16, to total 705).

Agencies that reflect proposed decreases in total staff years for FY 2011 include the Natural Resources Conservation Service (a decrease of 2,539 staff years, to total 11,565 staff years), the Forest Service (1,466, to total 35,294), the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (137, to total 7,751), and Departmental Administration (36, to total 539).

The number of Farm Service Agency non-federal county employees is projected to stay at the FY 2010 level of 9,425.

"These staff year estimates," Steele pointed out, "are all subject to adjustments to reflect the final outcome of budget negotiations with the Congress."

*Highlights of USDA's FY 2011 budget proposal, thought to be of particular interest to USDA employees, include:*

① \$10 billion over 10 years to strengthen the FNS-administered Child Nutrition and WIC Programs through reforms aimed at improving program access, establishing high standards for the nutritional quality of food available in schools, exploring new strategies for reducing hunger and improv-

ing children's food choices, and improving program management.

② \$50 million as part of the Administration's \$400 million "Healthy Food Financing Initiative" to bring grocery stores and other healthy food retailers to underserved communities.

③ an increase of \$1.4 million for Rural Development and a reserve of five percent in funding from a number of programs in RD, the Agricultural Marketing Service, NRCS, and the Forest Service—all to support USDA's "Regional Innovation Initiative" that seeks to increase the pros-

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# Notes *from USDA Headquarters*

## 'Open Government' Website:

Departments across the federal government are moving ahead with efforts to make themselves more transparent and collaborative, as they respond to the federal government's 'Open Government' Directive that they provide more and better information about how they conduct the public's business. USDA is a part of that movement.

Secretary **Tom Vilsack** sent a memorandum, dated Feb. 4, 2010 and titled "A More Open, Collaborative USDA," to all USDA employees across the country, encouraging further openness. In his memo he pointed out that six days earlier the Department had launched its own 'Open Government' website—[www.USDA.gov/OPEN](http://www.USDA.gov/OPEN). He described that move as an important step to make USDA, along with all of the federal government, "interact with the public in a more open, transparent & collaborative way."

**Amanda Eamich** is USDA's Director of New Media, located in the Office of Communications. She explained that the website is designed to house valuable public information and datasets about USDA. "But," she added, "it's also designed to stimulate conversations about USDA's policies and programs, and how we at USDA can become more open through transparency, participation, and collaboration in the future."

"Through our website," she emphasized, "we want the public to provide us with feedback about how we should form our 'Open Government Plan' and about our published datasets and other information that shows them how their government does business. In the process, the public will be helping us shape our 'open government' effort, here at USDA, that best serves them."

**Peter Rhee**, USDA's Creative Media Director, also located in OC, noted that USDA's 'open government' website consists of two main components: "Discuss Our Ideas" and "Share Your Ideas." "Their names are pretty self-explanatory," he said. "These two areas allow the public to discuss USDA ideas and information as well as share their own ideas with us."

As described on the website, the purpose of the "Discuss Our Ideas" component is that it "allows you to learn about and comment on USDA information such as available and proposed datasets, records, reports & other resources. You can comment on topics that are

important to you, which will help us prioritize future actions." Similarly, the stated purpose of the "Share Your Ideas" component is that it "allows you to post your own ideas about transparency, participation, collaboration and innovation. You can also submit comments or vote on other ideas. Your participation will help us create USDA's Open Gov Plan and be more innovative & efficient."

USDA recently posted its first five items on the "Discuss Our Ideas" component of the website: USDA's annual Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) annual reports for 2000-2009; USDA's "MyPyramid Food Raw Data"; race, ethnicity, and gender profile data from the 2007 Census of Agriculture; the Economic Research Service's "Feed Grains Database"; and the Agricultural Research Service's "National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference" concerning food composition in the U.S.

## SAVE:

The federal government received over 38,000 suggestions as part of its SAVE campaign last fall—and USDA's **Julie Fosbender** ended up being one of the four finalists.

The "Securing Americans Value and Efficiency" (SAVE) contest invited federal employees to submit ideas for how federal agencies could trim costs and save taxpayer dollars. The winner would meet with President **Barack Obama** and have his or her savings initiative incorporated into the federal FY 2011 budget.

Secretary **Tom Vilsack** sent a memorandum, dated September 24, 2009 and titled "President Obama's SAVE Award," to USDA employees across the country, encouraging them to participate. "This contest," he wrote, "is part of a larger effort to make sure that we invest taxpayer dollars in programs and initiatives that have proven records of success and fix or end programs that do not." All submissions were confidential and the deadline for submission was October 14, 2009.

According to **Dan Basila**, the Confidential Assistant to USDA's Chief Financial Officer, USDA employees submitted 4,712 suggestions as part of the SAVE campaign.

Fosbender, a Forest Service Recreation Manager based on the Monongahela National Forest's Cheat-Potomac Ranger District in Petersburg, WV, submitted a suggestion dealing with how to more efficiently deposit recreational fees, such as campground fees. Those fees are collected from visitors to this



Secretary **Tom Vilsack** (left) and Associate Attorney General **Thomas Perrelli** are participating in a national media conference call on February 18, held at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC. The purpose is to announce the successful resolution of the longstanding litigation known as "Pigford II." The February 18 settlement agreement, which is contingent on an appropriation by Congress, is to provide a total of \$1.25 billion to African American farmers who had alleged that they suffered racial discrimination in USDA farm loan programs. "The agreement reached today," Vilsack said, "is an important milestone in putting these discriminatory claims behind us for good and in achieving finality for this group of farmers with longstanding grievances."—**PHOTO BY BOB NICHOLS**

country's national forests—that are managed by the Forest Service. Her written submission can be found on the contest's website, [www.SaveAward.gov](http://www.SaveAward.gov). She estimated her suggestion would lead to savings FS-wide in employee time, transportation costs, and money order fees.

In late October Fosbender was contacted by an official from the Office of Management and Budget, who wanted more details about her suggestion. "When I got her voice mail message, and before I returned the call," she laughed, "I initially thought that it was a colleague at work who was pranking me." Then several weeks later OMB contacted her again, notifying her that her suggestion had been selected by a panel of senior OMB officials as one of four finalists out of over 38,000 suggestions. Ultimately the winning suggestion came from a Veterans Affairs employee.

And what is the status of Fosbender's suggestion? "I'm told that my agency is working with officials at the U.S. Treasury Department," she replied, "with the intent to implement the parts of my suggestion that have been determined to be doable." ■

—**RON HALL**

# Employees *make these things happen*

## RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS

### We've Been Tracking A Century Of Eating Trends By Americans

**U**SDA is serious about tracking the amount of individual foods and food groups that Americans consume annually. It knows that this information is useful to researchers, policymakers, members of the press, marketers, and also the general public.

And on February 18, when it released its newly updated 'U.S. food availability data system,' that particular release marked 100 years of data—from 1909 to 2008, the most recent data available—for many of the several hundred food commodities that it covers.

That data is available in USDA's "Food Availability Data System"—and it's the only source of long-term food consumption in the country.

**Jean Buzby**, an Economist with the Economic Research Service, noted that ERS created and maintains the data system and updates it annually. USDA's "Food Availability (Per Capita) Data System" is accessible at [www.ers.usda.gov/Data/FoodConsumption](http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/FoodConsumption). "And," she noted, "accompanying the release of the hundredth year of data is a multimedia presentation, in an easy-to-follow fashion, that highlights the uses and implications of the data."

Buzby explained that 'food availability' is essentially the per capita amount of food in the U.S. food marketing system that is

available for consumption. "Our economists in ERS *include* the production and imports of the various foods, and *exclude* exports as well as farm and industrial uses, to arrive at an approximation of what Americans consume on average," she noted. Buzby then clarified that 'food availability'—which she advised is an easier way to say "per capita food consumption"—includes all food, from grocery stores, restaurants, school cafeterias, and other eating places.

But whether it's called "Food availability" or "Per capita food consumption," what does it matter to **Joe and Sally Citizen**—or to USDA's 100,000-plus employees, located across the country and around the world?

"When you have the capability of looking at literally 100 years of American eating," Buzby replied, "you can see a reflection of social, economic, and technological developments—including health concerns."

"For instance," she added, "right now there's a lot of focus on obesity in America, particularly among the youth in this country. So the ability to track dietary trends among Americans—especially over a long period of time—can be a big help in the effort to combat obesity among both adults and children."

ERS Economist **Hodan Wells** pointed out some interesting trends—described on the above-mentioned website—that reflect various social, economic, or technological developments that are a part of the history

of the U.S. For instance, cheese availability has skyrocketed, rising from 11.4 pounds per person in 1970 to 31.4 pounds in 2008. "During that time frame," she explained, "the popularity of food establishments increased that use a lot of cheese, such as Italian and Mexican eateries. In addition, over the years innovative cheese products have been developed—such as cheese sticks to put in children's lunchboxes and shredded cheese to sprinkle on salads—and more convenient packaging for cheese and cheese products has been developed as well."

As a second example, Wells noted that the per capita availability of chicken increased five-fold in the past century. "This illustrates," she said, "advances in product development, mass production, and, more recently, health concerns associated with fat and the cholesterol content of meats."

As a third example, she pointed to a sharp rise in per capita consumption of carbonated soft drinks since the 1940s, along with a corresponding decline in the numbers for milk. As a major reason, she cited the increase, during the last half-century, of away-from-home meals—such as from 'fast food outlets'—plus the increasing popularity of salty snack foods.

"I encourage anyone interested in food consumption trends to walk through our website," Buzby invited. ■

—MARY REARDON

## RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS

### Here's A Creative Way That ERS Shares Its Knowledge With Students

**“Distance Learning”** is not new to USDA. But a version of "Distance Learning" currently practiced by specialists in the Economic Research Service just might be a whole new dimension in educational innovation at the Department.

First, though, some basics: According to ERS Agricultural Economists **Keithly Jones** and **Chris Davis**, who are the agency's Distance Learning Program Coordinators, "Distance Learning" describes a learning situation in which the instructor is at one site, the students are at an entirely different

site, and they are employing such telecommunications devices as webconferencing, videoconferencing, teleconferencing, and the Internet to interact with each other.

"And in fact," noted Davis, "right at the outset I want to credit our colleagues at other USDA agencies for the versions of Distance Learning that they've been practicing." He cited such examples as Rural Development's "Distance Learning/Telemedicine Loan/Grant" (DLT) Program, the Food Safety and Inspection Service's "Distance Learning for Employees" Program, the National Agricultural Statistics Service's "Training and Career Development Distance Learning Initiative,"

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These 5 Agricultural Economists—(L to R) **Chris Davis, Carolyn Dimitri, Ed Slattery, Phil Kaufman, and Keithly Jones**—are in a conference room in Washington, DC, listening to a live videoconference presentation by students located at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee. It's all part of ERS's Distance Learning Program, thought to be unique within USDA.—**PHOTO BY STEPHEN PETERSON**



# Editor's Roundup *USDA's people in the news*



**Karen Ross** is the Chief of Staff for Secretary **Tom Vilsack**.

Before joining USDA, from 1996 until her appointment to this position Ross served as President of the California Association of Winegrape Growers, based in Sacramento. During that same time period she also served as the Executive Director of the Winegrape Growers of America, a coalition of state winegrower organizations, and as Executive Director of the California Wine Grape Grow-

ers Foundation, which sponsors scholarships for the children of vineyard employees.

Ross served from 1989-96 as Vice President of Government Affairs for the Agricultural Council of California, based in Sacramento, where she specialized in food safety, pesticide use, environmental and cooperative business and tax laws, as well as coordinated that group's public relations program. From 1985-88 she was the Government Relations Director for the Nebraska Rural Electric Association, based in Lincoln. She directed the state office in Lincoln of [then] U.S. Sen.

**Ed Zorinsky** (D-NE) from 1978-85. She was born and grew up on a family farm in western Nebraska, where her family still farms.

**John Norris**, the previous Chief of Staff, was confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve as a Commissioner on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which regulates the interstate transmission of natural gas, oil, and electricity, and also regulates natural gas and hydropower projects. ■

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and the National Agricultural Library's Digital Desktop Library called "DigiTop" plus its Agriculture Network Information Center called "AgNIC."

"But" he emphasized, "we think that our particular Distance Learning Program at ERS is opening up a whole new way of furthering education at the Department."

Jones explained that in 2007 ERS initiated a Distance Learning Program in which specialists from the agency interact with students on campus at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, and Virginia State University in Petersburg. The specialists give presentations on a variety of agricultural policy topics.

"The interaction is simultaneous between our specialists here in Washington, DC and the students at all three campuses, and it's through use of interactive real-time technology," he pointed out. "Our presentations are not quite an hour long, and they're followed by a 15-minute Q&A session. Then, generally one week later, the students from each of the three campuses give group presentations—on the same subject matter—to ERS specialists and to students from the other campuses who had participated in the interaction one week earlier."

According to Davis, previous topics have included "Evolving Demand Transforms Global Food Markets," "Rural Development Strategies: A Case Study of the Meat Packing Industry," "The State and Outlook of the U.S. Macroeconomy," and "The Economics of Obesity." The final topics are generally chosen by the institutions, the ERS instructors are specialists who have worked on those topics for the Department, and the participating students are generally undergraduates. He

noted that, to date, at least 30 ERS employees have served as instructors.

"Each of our topics," Jones said, "runs on a four-week cycle." During Week One, ERS specialists send appropriate subject matter materials to the participating schools. During Week Two, while completing their regularly scheduled coursework, the students view a five-minute topic overview sent by ERS—to prepare the students for Week Three. In Week Three the ERS specialists provide their 45-minute seminar, live, to the students simultaneously at the participating schools. Week Four is when the students provide their followup PowerPoint presentation to ERS specialists—while those specialists view and critique the students' research.

Several ERS employees who had participated in the process offered their thoughts about its value. For instance, ERS Senior Agricultural Economist **Anita Regmi** recalled that "I received a fair amount of questions from the audience." ERS Dairy Economist **Don Blayne** observed that "This project helps the students learn how complex economic analysis can be."

Beginning in January 2010, ERS's Distance Learning Program expanded to include students at the University of Maryland—Eastern Shore in Princess Anne, MD; Oglala Lakota College in Kyle, SD; and Fort Valley State University in Fort Valley, GA. As part of the format, students at those three schools participate simultaneously with students at the other three campuses.

Okay, this is all well and good—but why is ERS doing this in the first place? How does this tie in with the mission of the agency?

"The short answer to that question," replied Jones, "is that it's part of ERS's effort to

promote careers in agricultural economics by minorities. This particular strategy, we think, is a rather unique way of targeting students who attend minority institutions—and then challenging them intellectually, while, in the process, ultimately arousing their curiosity and interest in our mission."

"More specifically," added Davis, "we want to bring more awareness of ERS research information in order to expand the agricultural programs at those universities. Finally, we want to accomplish those goals while working with a diverse audience—and we feel that targeting minority-serving institutions is a sound strategy to get there."

Davis and Jones both acknowledged that ERS's Distance Learning Program has had to overcome several challenges along the way. "For instance," Davis said, "we at USDA know the challenges when we try to schedule meetings among various participants with their own set of schedule conflicts. Similar challenges arise when we Distance Learning Program Coordinators try to schedule our education sessions among our ERS specialists here in DC and the students and faculty at the different college campuses—plus working around more than one time zone in the process. And we always need to make sure that our format and subject matter are consistent with the goals of both ERS and the participating schools." "Finally," noted ERS Information Technology Specialist **Bob Donegan**, "we always need to be ready to instantly correct any real-time communications or other technical issues that might arise."

"But," Davis affirmed, "as our track record shows, we've been making it all happen." ■

—DORIS NEWTON



**J**ohn Brewer is the Administrator of the Foreign Agricultural Service.

From January 1, 2010 until his appointment to this position Brewer served as Acting Administrator for FAS. He had served as FAS's Associate

Administrator since June 2009 and also as USDA's General Sales Manager since August 2009.

Brewer worked in McLean, VA from 2008-09 as an Associate on the Global Security/Threat Finance Team with the consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton, where he focused on a variety of intelligence and finance-related

projects for the U.S. Departments of Defense, State, Homeland Security, and Treasury, as well as for private-sector financial institutions such as the Bank of America and Wachovia. From 2006-08 he was a Senior Analyst in the Office of Global Risk Assessments at the American International Group (AIG) in New York City,

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## PROFILE PLUS More About: Marilyn Polansky



**M**arilyn Polansky is a Chemist with the Agricultural Research Service, based in Beltsville, MD. Her career with ARS has included working on various aspects of vitamin B-6 and tea, plus conducting research on chromium and cinnamon in cell cultures, animals, and humans.

Polansky has done a lot of research in those areas, and she has had a long career. In fact, since her federal service computation date is November 1953, she has over 56 years of full-time federal service. Therefore, Polansky is thought to be the USDA employee with the most years of full-time federal service who is still employed full-time at the Department. **Mary Alvarez**, an Animal Health Assistant with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service in Brownsville, TX, previously held that distinction until she retired in November 2009 with 61 years and 8 months of full-time federal service.

Polansky, who is 80, was born on Sept. 4, 1929, in Stillwater, OK. When she was in the sixth grade her family moved to a cattle ranch, near San Antonio, TX, that her father managed. She graduated from [then] Oklahoma A&M College—now Oklahoma State University—in 1950 with a B.S. degree in food science. In 1952 she earned an M.S. degree in food and nutrition from Cornell University.

Polansky began her USDA career on July 7, 1952 as a Nutritionist with ARS in Beltsville. **Charles Brannan**—who had been nominated to the position by [then] President **Harry Truman**—was serving as USDA's Secretary on that date. At the time the U.S. was involved in the Korean War, and Polansky's first project dealt with analyzing the chemical content of meat for the U.S. Army. "But my role in that," she recounted, "focused on the paperwork, not the hands-on research." Her next big project got her more directly involved in analysis. As part of ARS's [then] Microbiological Assay Section, she measured the amount of vitamins in various foods.

By the late 1950s Polansky had become an ARS Chemist focusing on vitamin B-6, measuring the amount of it in various foods. During that time she published or co-published various research papers and reports on her findings. "The target audience: anyone interested in food content, including fellow scientists, dietitians, university researchers, and the lay public," she explained.

Polansky began to concentrate on chromium during the late 1960s. But her work no longer involved only analyses and measurement. Now she focused on 'bio-active' work—determining the biologically active form of chromium that functions in the body.

In the 1970s and '80s Polansky's work focused on the requirements and functions of chromium and other trace elements in human and animal nutrition. "I was part of the group that demonstrated that 'trivalent chromium'—a good form of chromium—plays a critical role in sugar and fat metabolism," she said. Her work was

considered to have been instrumental in determining the dietary intake and setting the requirements for chromium in humans. Her studies were also considered to have been instrumental in determining that causes of stress—such as high sugar foods and other factors that increase glucose and insulin metabolism—also increase chromium requirements.

By the 1990s Polansky's focus had switched to cinnamon. She noted that, to the best of her knowledge, ARS was one of the early pioneers in doing research into the effects of the components of cinnamon on sugar metabolism. "I was looking for what we call the 'active peaks' in cinnamon," she advised. "That means physically extracting various components from cinnamon and then determining which components cause the most positive reactions on insulin function. Cinnamon is good for you—and the 'active peaks' of cinnamon can be even better, due in part to improved function of insulin." She said many of the chronic diseases, including type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, are related to the decreased function of insulin. "Cinnamon improves insulin function and also decreases risk factors of those diseases," she said.

She also conducted similar research on tea—looking for its 'active peaks' to find which of its components cause the most positive reaction in the human body. "Cinnamon and tea," she noted, "have similar effects on improving insulin function and decreasing risk factors associated with type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases."

Polansky has spent her entire federal career with USDA—more specifically, with ARS—and even more specifically, in Beltsville. In addition, for the first 50 years of her career, her office was located directly in a lab. "When I'd come to work," she recalled, "I'd go directly to the lab, hang my coat there, and get started. I worked in a total of three different labs—in two buildings—during those first 50 years." Then, in 2003, she moved into a new building in Beltsville. "Now, when I come to work, I hang my coat in an actual office," she quipped, "and then I walk down the hall to get to the lab, and then get started."

Any major lab accidents or mishaps during the first 56 years of her still ongoing career? "Maybe a few spills of items, here and there, but nothing serious." And during those first 56 years, any thought of going into management? "I want to stay in the lab," she declared.

**Last Book Read:** "I haven't read a book in ages. I'm too busy with work and feeding birds and gardening."

**Last Movie Seen:** "I haven't been to a movie in ages either. Probably the last time was when I took my two kids to see some **Walt Disney** movie. But now they're both in their 40s, with their own kids."

**Something I Don't Want People To Know About Me:** "Okay, your readers now know that I'm 80 years old. Am I really 80? I can't believe it. But, on the other hand, what's that line about 'Don't Resent Growing Old; A Great Many People Are Denied The Privilege?'"

**Priorities In The Months Ahead:** "I don't have any plans to retire yet, and I plan to continue my research on cinnamon for ARS." ■

—RON HALL



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where he was responsible for providing analysis on business risks and global threats to AIG and its largest customers. He also worked as Assistant Editor of AIG's Executive Briefing Book, a strategic analysis of global risk provided to the CEOs and risk managers of leading AIG customers.

Brewer spent over a decade—from 1994-2006—with the federal government, where he served in such positions as a Senior Intelligence Analyst in the Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, focusing on anti-money laundering/counter-terrorist financing programs; a Senior Advisor in the Defense Department's Office of Counter-Narcotics from 1998-2001, focusing on U.S. counter-narcotics policy; and an Analyst in the State Department's Bureau of

Intelligence & Research from 1994-98, focusing on U.S. policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Mike Michener**, FAS's previous Administrator, is now USDA's Special Representative at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture in Rome, Italy. ■



**M**iles McEvoy is the Deputy Administrator of the National Organic Program in the Agricultural Marketing Service.

Before joining USDA, from 1988 until his selection for this position McEvoy served as the Organic Program Manager for the Washington State Department of Agriculture, based in Olympia.

During that time period McEvoy was also a founding member, in 1998, of the National Association of State Organic Programs, and served as its president from 2001-03 and again from 2006-09. Its mission is to work with state departments of agriculture to support and regulate the various organic programs throughout the nation. Also during that time he helped to establish Washington State's Small Farm and Direct Marketing Program in 2000. Its purpose is to support direct marketing opportunities of agricultural commodities through such outlets as farmers markets, farm-to-school programs, and value-added processing initiatives such as mobile slaughter plants.

This is a newly established position based on an AMS reorganization in 2009. ■

**Proposed Budget...continued from pg. 2**

perity of rural communities by strategically investing in regional planning efforts.

④ An increase of \$83 million to support the Department's multi-agency effort to modernize and upgrade its Common Computing Environment (CCE). This will improve the ability of FSA, NRCS, and Rural Development

to serve program participants. This funding will allow for the first major system-wide 'refresh'—the replacement of computer hardware—of CCE since the infrastructure was implemented in 2000.

⑤ \$6.5 million to support a new Governmentwide Contracting and Acquisition Workforce Training initiative. The requested funding would allow USDA to implement training, recruitment, and retention activities for the Department's procurement workforce that is responsible for over \$5 billion in annual procurement for USDA.

⑥ an increase of \$2 million, to total \$63.7 million, for the Office of the Chief Information Officer, to expand a Departmentwide cyber security initiative to address deficiencies in the USDA network and IT systems.

⑦ \$7 million for USDA's newly-created Office of Advocacy and Outreach to increase the accessibility of USDA programs to underserved constituents and to carry out Farm Bill provisions concerning outreach to beginning, small, and socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers, and rural communities.

⑧ a total of \$24 million for the Office of Civil Rights to improve USDA's handling of civil rights matters.

⑨ \$14.6 million to support USDA's participation in agricultural reconstruction and stabilization activities, primarily in Afghanistan. USDA's efforts, coordinated by the Foreign Agricultural Service, include providing technical advisors to Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) that operate in the rural provinces of that country. USDA employees are advisors who serve in temporary assignments.

⑩ \$38 million for the National Agricul-

tural Statistics Service to support the second year of the 2012 Census of Agriculture's five year cycle.

⑪ \$27 million in initiatives, to total over \$1 billion, for FSIS to more quickly identify and respond to outbreaks of foodborne illness as recommended by the President's Food Safety Working Group.

For more details on USDA's proposed staffing levels, as well as additional details on other aspects of USDA's proposed budget for FY 2011, click on [www.usda.gov/budget](http://www.usda.gov/budget). ■



*"Looks like I'm in pretty good company," quips RD Agricultural Economist **Charlie Ling** (right), as he and **Shirley Brown**, the Executive Assistant in the Office of the Chief Economist, study the latest name added to the "Economist of the Year" plaque, hanging outside the OCE office in the Whitten Building at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC. The USDA Economists Group, which primarily consists of economists from USDA headquarters and field locations, annually honors a USDA economist for that person's work in economic research and analysis that contributes to the Department's mission. According to **Steve Neff**, an FSA Agricultural Economist and president of the organization, the USDA Economists Group has been bestowing that honor to a USDA employee since 1996. Ling formally received that distinction on January 21 for the marketing-related information he has provided about dairy cooperatives nationwide, plus technical assistance to the nation's farmer cooperatives.—**PHOTO BY ALICE WELCH***

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"I hope you're not claustrophobic," quips FSA Assistant Deputy Administrator for Commodity Operations **Sandra Wood** (right), as she adds more duct tape to pin up the now-inert FSA Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs **Brandon Willis**. Wood had just paid \$2 for every yard of duct tape that she is using to make sure that Willis definitely doesn't go anywhere, at least for awhile. The event was one of many recent creative fund-raising activities by USDA employees in support of the 2009 Combined Federal Campaign. USDA headquarters and many field offices participated in the 2009 CFC through January 2010. NAL Senior Analyst and CFC Campaign Manager **Susan McCarthy** noted that USDA employees in the Washington, DC metropolitan area raised over \$2.04 million for that campaign.—**PHOTO BY JANET CONNELLY**



Help us find

## ABIGAIL MARTINEZ

Missing: **10-23-2009** From: **Manassas, VA**

D.O.B.: **2-8-1993**

Sex: **Female**

Hair: **Black**

Eyes: **Brown**

Height: **5 ft. 4 in.**

Weight: **130 lbs.**

*If you have information, please call*

**1-800-843-5678**

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AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN**

## USDA-Sponsored Calendar Highlights

### ■ March 23-26

*2010 Food Safety Education Conference: "Advancements in Food Safety Education: Trends, Tools, and Technologies"*

Atlanta, GA

(301) 344-4744 or 1-800-256-7072 (TTY)

[www.fsis.usda.gov/Atlanta2010](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Atlanta2010)

### ■ Month of March

*Women's History Month*

USDA headquarters and field offices

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### ■ Month of March

*National Nutrition Month*

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